

I will Convert Sinners

THE VIRGIN WITH THE GOLDEN HEART





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“I WILL CONVERT SINNERS”

*Our Lady's Apparitions at
Beauraing, 1932-1933*

By
DON SHARKEY

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FOREWORD

“It was through Mary that the salvation of the world was begun and it is through Mary that it must be consummated. Mary hardly appeared at all in the first coming of Jesus Christ, but in the second coming. . . . Mary has to be made known and revealed by the Holy Ghost, in order that through Her, Jesus Christ may be known, loved and served.”

St. Louis Marie de Montfort, (“True Devotion”)

“Our Lady is pleading with us to help her save the world from the terrible results of its own sins. The very least we can do is to read her message. After that, we must act upon it.”

Don Sharkey, in “The Woman Shall Conquer.”

Nihil Obstat. Michael Noonan, S.M., S.T.D., Diocesan Censor
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"I WILL CONVERT SINNERS"

THE STORY OF OUR LADY'S APPARITIONS AT BEAURAING, 1932-1933

Almost every American Catholic has heard the story of Our Lady's appearance at Lourdes in 1858.

Almost every American Catholic has also heard the story of her apparitions at Fatima in 1917.

Less well known, on this side of the Atlantic, is the story of her appearances at Beauraing (*Bo rang*), Belgium, in 1932 and 1933.

Beauraing deserves to be more widely known in the United States. The words which Our Lady spoke at Beauraing are meant for all the world, not just for the five children to whom she spoke, and not just for the people of Europe.

Beauraing is a town of about 2,000 people in the Walloon, or French speaking, part of Belgium. It is twelve miles from the city of Dinant and five miles from the French border.

At one time the inhabitants of the area had been staunch Catholics, but by 1932 many of them had drifted away from the Church. Some were merely indifferent toward the Catholic faith; others were hostile to it. The Socialists, who made no secret of their opposition to the Church, carried the district in most elections.

THE EVENTS

First Apparition

Gilberte Voisin, a 13-year old girl of Beauraing, attended a school taught by the Sisters of the Christian Doctrine. Her father, an official at the local railway station, allowed her to attend this school despite the fact that neither he nor his wife went to church. Gilberte, a very religious girl, had long been praying that her parents would return to the Church.

On the evening of November 29, 1932, Fernande and Albert Voisin started toward the school to walk home with their sister. Fernande was 15, and her brother, Albert, was 11.

They were joined by Andree Degeimbre, 14, and her sister, Gilberte, 9 $\frac{1}{2}$. We see, then, that there are two Gilbertes involved in this story. It will simplify matters if we call them Gilberte V. and Gilberte D. Albert was the only boy among the five.

The two older children walked arm in arm. Albert and Gilberte D. amused themselves by ringing the doorbells of the houses they passed.

After a short walk, they came to the convent where the school was located. Just past the convent the street was crossed by a railroad viaduct. The railroad embankment ran behind the convent and grounds. The convent was on the right hand side of the street as the children faced the railroad embankment. The convent and grounds were bordered by a fence. Just inside the fence was a garden. In the garden was a Lourdes grotto which helped

hide the unsightly railroad embankment. The large house which contained the convent and the school stood in front of the embankment.

The children went to the front door of the house and rang the bell. They waited for Gilberte V. to come out.

"Look!" Albert exclaimed suddenly. "The Blessed Virgin walking on that bridge!"

The other children turned and beheld "the figure of a Lady, dressed in a long robe of pure white." She appeared to be walking, or gliding, on the viaduct. Gilberte V. came out. She wondered what the others were looking at so intently. Then she, too, saw the vision.

The children ran home to tell what they had seen. Nobody believed the story. In the face of universal skepticism the children stuck to their story and would not be swayed by any outside influence. Their minds were preoccupied with one thought: "Would they see the Lady again?" And there was no more ringing of doorbells.

More Trouble

The next night the four children again walked to the school to meet Gilberte V. Once more all five of them beheld the figure in white walking back and forth on the railroad embankment.

The children ran into Madame Degeimbre's house shouting: "We've seen her! It is the Blessed Virgin, and she is much more beautiful than any of her statues!"

Madame Degeimbre was furious. She told her children that they must not go to the convent again.

The whole town was talking about the apparitions. Madame Degeimbre, who was a widow, decided that the matter must be settled once and for all. She would expose the people who were tricking her children. On December 1, armed with a big stick, she accompanied the four children to the convent.

Scarcely had they reached the garden when the children came face to face with the Lady. She was near the Lourdes grotto this time. She was dressed entirely in white and there were golden rays like a diadem around her head. She appeared to be standing on a cloud. Her feet were not visible. She extended her arms slowly and then disappeared.

Madame Degeimbre, who could see nothing, sent the four children to get Gilberte V. Then, with her stick, she thrashed about in the bushes for the person who was playing tricks on her children.

As soon as the children returned from the convent, the vision reappeared as glorious as ever. A few moments later, as the children left the convent yard, the vision was visible at the gate. This time the Lady appeared near the lowest branch of a hawthorn tree, just inside the garden fence. This was where she appeared for all the remaining apparitions. Gilberte D., the youngest of the five children was overcome with emotion. She had to be taken home. Gilberte V. stayed with her. The other three children returned to the

convent, and they beheld the vision for the fourth time that evening.

Madame Degeimbre was so struck by the effect of the apparition on the children that she began to waver in her doubt, but it was not until before the last apparition that she completely believed her children. Monsieur Voisin searched the ground with a torch but could find no sign of fraud. The parents went to the parish priest, Abbe Lambert. He advised them to discuss the matter with no one. It was difficult to heed this advice, because everyone was asking about the apparition.

The next day Mother Theophile, superior of the convent, told the children not to speak again of the apparitions. She also told them to stay out of the convent garden.

That evening the children's mothers asked them to go to the convent to meet Gilberte V. They could not disobey their mothers, so they found themselves in the garden once more. Again, they saw the vision, this time even more clearly than before.

The Vision

The Lady looked young, about 18 or 20. Her smile lighted up all her features. Her eyes were a beautiful deep blue. She wore a long, white, heavily pleated unbelted dress. The children said that three rays of blue azure draped the dress, obliquely, from the left shoulder to the hem. A rosary hung from her arm.

Albert asked, "Are you the Immaculate Virgin?"

The Lady smiled and nodded her head.

"What do you want?" Albert asked.

Then came the first words uttered by Our Lady at Beauraing: "Always be good."

Our Lady's hands had been joined as if in prayer. Before she left she opened up her arms as if giving the children a farewell embrace. Then she disappeared.

Abbe Lambert thought the message sounded like something the children had thought up. He could not bring himself to believe that the Blessed Virgin would make such a trite remark as: "Always be good."

Mother Theophile ordered the gates of the garden locked at dusk, and she put two fierce dogs inside.

On Saturday, in obedience to the Superior, the children stayed away from the garden. They were sad because they would not see their Lady that day. At dusk, when Mother Theophile went out to lock the garden gate, she found a crowd of 150 standing in the street.

"You are wasting your time here," Mother Theophile said. "There is nothing to see."

"What a Socialist we have in this woman," said a member of the crowd. "She has less belief in this business than we have."

The next day, Mother Theophile relented. She said that because the children had obeyed her they could again come to the garden.

The apparitions continued. For the first few apparitions in the garden, the Lady was already visible when the children got

there. Later, she became visible after the children had begun to recite the rosary. They had formed the habit of saying the rosary as soon as they arrived in the garden. Each time Our Lady appeared, the children felt themselves drawn to a kneeling position, almost as if they were thrown to their knees.

Our Lady asked the children to come and pray to her in the evenings. Thus, after the day's work, great crowds would mingle with the children and witness their rapture even if they could not see the vision. The crowds grew constantly, and people came even from distant parts of the country.

Crowds for December 8

On several occasions Our Lady told the children that she wished them to be present on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Because the day had been specifically mentioned, the crowd was even larger than usual on December 8. About 15,000 people were there. No doubt some of the people were expecting a great sign, similar to the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima. Nothing of that kind occurred, but there was something interesting.

The children arrived at ten minutes past six. They were escorted by their parents and were accompanied by a number of doctors and psychologists. The children beheld the vision as soon as they reached the gate. The garden was illuminated brightly, but the vision was much more radiant than the electric lights.

Gilberte D. wept. Dr. Maistriaux asked her why.

"Because she is so beautiful," Gilberte answered.

A few seconds later the doctor asked her another question. She failed to answer. Each child was examined in turn by different doctors. All were found to be in a state of complete ecstasy.

Dr. Lurquin, of Houyet, held a lighted match under Gilberte V.'s left hand. She did not notice it. Other doctors pinched, slapped, and pricked the five children. They shined flashlights into their eyes. There was no reaction.

All this time, the huge crowd was saying the Rosary. As soon as they completed the last decade, Our Lady disappeared.

"She is gone!" cried the children. They had tears in their eyes.

Later, Fernande said: "I could see nothing, neither fence, nor tree, nor crowd: only the Holy Virgin who smiled at us."

The doctors examined Gilberte V.'s hand and could not find the slightest trace of burning. When they had completed their examination she said to her father: "Just think of it! They tried to tell me that they had pricked and burned me!"

Remaining Apparitions

On December 17, Our Lady asked for a chapel. She said she wished the chapel "in order that people might come here on pilgrimages."

Four days later she said: "I am the Immaculate Virgin."

A few days after that she said: "Soon I shall appear for the last time."

On December 29, the Blessed Virgin opened her arms in the usual gesture of farewell. In doing so, she revealed in the region of her chest a Heart of Gold, surrounded by glittering rays. This was the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God. This Heart was displayed in all the remaining apparitions at Beauraing.

The next evening Our Lady said: "Pray. Pray very much."

On January 1, she said to Gilberte V.: "Pray always."

On January 2, she said: "Tomorrow I will speak to each one of you separately."

A great crowd was on hand for the last appearance, January 3, 1933. Four of the children gave a joyous shout as the apparition began. Fernande sobbed because she could not see the vision.

As she had promised, Our Lady talked to each child separately.

To Andree, she said: "I am the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven. Pray Always. Goodbye."

To Gilberte V. Our Lady made a great promise: "I will convert sinners. Goodbye."

To Albert and to Gilberte D. she simply said: "Goodbye."

When the vision was over, Fernande, who was grief stricken at not seeing her Lady, remained kneeling. Suddenly, she heard a crashing noise, and she saw a

great ball of fire on the tree. Then she saw the Blessed Virgin.

"Do you love my Son?" Our Lady asked.

"Yes."

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Then, sacrifice yourself for me."

She extended her arms in the usual farewell gesture. As she did so, she shone more brightly than ever. She showed Fernande her Heart.

Then, she said: "Goodbye."

Fernande wept because she was sure that she would never again in this world see the beautiful vision of Our Lady.

Afterward, the three youngest children said that Our Lady had told each of them a personal message which they might not tell to anyone, not even to each other.

REACTIONS — CURES

The story of the apparitions caused a sensation all over Europe. Some authorities said the children were frauds. Others said they were victims of hallucinations. In 1934 and 1935, a number of books and magazine articles were written for the purpose of "exposing" Beauraing. Through all this, the great majority of the people and the clergy believed the story of the children. Many pilgrimages were made to the site of apparitions.

Gradually, doubt and skepticism disappeared as the facts of the story became

known and as the results were observed.

The children remained in Beauraing and led lives as close to normal as was possible under the circumstances. They visited the hawthorn tree each day to say the Rosary. Often they were besieged by pilgrims, by curiosity seekers, and by those who had come to scoff. They bore such ordeals with amazing patience.

After the Bishop set up an Episcopal Commission to investigate the events, the children underwent long and severe examinations. They once had to appear before a "tribunal" of 90 doctors. In the course of the investigation, the children never varied their stories and they never contradicted each other when interviewed separately.

Pilgrims came from the very beginning, even in the period when it was so fashionable to "expose" Beauraing. There were two million pilgrims the first year. On a single Sunday, 25,000 people received Communion in the parish church.

Miraculous Cures

Many cures were reported by pilgrims. There was Miss Maria Van Laer, for example.

Miss Van Laer was a patient in a hospital conducted by the Franciscan Sisters of the Holy Family, in Turnhout, Belgium. She had been a helpless invalid for 16 of her 33 years. Hers was a tubercular condition. Her spinal column was de-

formed, one of her legs was diseased, and she had large tumors which had developed into open sores. The doctors said that an operation would be fatal, and they held out no hope for her recovery.

Against the wishes of her family and the Franciscan Sisters, Miss Van Laer was taken to Beauraing on June 24, 1933. Her stretcher was taken to the hawthorn tree where she remained for some time. Then she visited the Degeimbre home. During a second visit to the hawthorn tree, she said she was feeling better. She slept in the ambulance on the way home. When she reached Turnhout, at midnight, she awoke and found herself cured. No pains, no tumors, no sores, and no deformities! Today, Miss Van Laer is Sister Pudentia of the Franciscan Sisters of the Holy Family and is well able to carry out her arduous duties as a nurse.

Miss Van Laer's cure was one of those investigated by the Episcopal Commission which the Bishop appointed to investigate the events at Beauraing. In 1949, Bishop Charue declared the cure to be an authentic miracle.

Conversions

More important than the physical cures are the spiritual cures. Among the earliest of the converts were the parents of the Voisin children; they returned to the sacraments after an absence of many years.

Here is one of the most famous of the conversion stories:

A young man gave up his faith and became a Communist. He was made editor of the Belgian Communist newspaper, "Le Drapeau Rouge" (The Red Flag). During the war he was arrested by the Germans, and since the Nazis had little use for the Communists, his life was in grave danger. His mother had never ceased to pray that he would come back to the Church. After he was arrested, she knelt in front of a statue of the Blessed Mother and prayed: "I was never able to do much with him. I do not ask you, good Mother, to see him alive, but please give him the grace to die in the Church. I give you my son. Do with him as you see fit!"

In prison, the young man remembered the Blessed Virgin and promised to return to the faith if he were liberated. He was freed, but he did not keep his promise. He was imprisoned again and freed again. Still he did not return to the faith.

In September, 1945, the young man was haunted by the thought that he should visit Beauraing. He tried to banish the thought, but he could not do so. He gave in and went to Beauraing, although he did not have the least bit of faith. He stood in the enclosure, facing the hawthorn, unable to pray. Suddenly, he was thrown to the ground. "I was trying to protect myself from the fall," he said, "and I fell, hanging onto the back of the last bench. For a long time I saw nothing but the figure of Our Lady in the hawthorn. A complete transformation was produced in me. I cried over my past life. But I also cried for joy, conscious

that something new had entered my soul.”

The following day the former Communist editor went to confession and received Holy Communion. He now receives Communion every day. He is a fervent tertiary of St. Dominic, and was in one of the first Legion of Mary groups in Belgium.

Many other conversions have been reported among people from many different countries. These conversions are called “The Great Invisible Treasure of Beauraing.” They recall Our Lady’s promise: “I will convert sinners.”

THE CHURCH’S ATTITUDE

In 1935, the Bishop of Namur, the diocese in which Beauraing is located, appointed an Episcopal Commission to investigate the events. The Bishop died, and the investigation continued under his successor, Bishop André-Marie Charue.

First Approval

Bishop Charue received from Rome a decree dated December 7, 1942, and approved by Pope Pius XII, which granted him complete liberty to proceed toward canonical recognition.

On February 2, 1943, the Bishop published a decree which authorized public devotions to “Our Lady of Beauraing.” This was during the dark days when the Germans were occupying Belgium, and the people took great comfort from the development.

On May 16 of the same year, Bishop Charue solemnly inaugurated this devotion at a great ceremony attended by 24,000 people. This was a large crowd for war days.

The Bishop blessed a large statue of Our Lady of Beauraing on August 22, 1946, the Feast of the Immaculate Heart. The statue stands under the hawthorn tree, where Our Lady had appeared.

Pilgrimages of Penance

Pope Pius XII granted a private interview to the Bishop of Namur on July 18, 1947. He gave his blessing to the Sanctuary and the pilgrimages of penance. These pilgrimages are held on the second and third Sundays of each month, from May to November. The pilgrims walk 12 miles to Beauraing, praying as they go.

The cornerstone of the chapel was laid on the Feast of the Immaculate Heart, 1947, and the chapel was consecrated August 21, 1954. This is the chapel which Our Lady requested. It is near the place of the apparitions, and with its confessionals, gives Our Lady the opportunity to convert souls.

The hawthorn tree is surrounded by bronze railings which serve as a gigantic votive candle stand. Beneath the tree is the statue of Our Lady of Beauraing, the Virgin with a Golden Heart. An open air altar stands on the spot where the Lourdes grotto used to be.

The Pro Maria Committee has bought the old feudal castle which stands on a

hill above the village. The castle is being used as a retreat house, and a beautiful basilica will be built on the grounds.

Final Approbation

On July 2, 1949, the Bishop released two important documents relating to Beauraing. One was an episcopal decree recognizing as authentic miracles two of the many cures credited to Our Lady of Beauraing. One was the cure of Miss Van Laer, about whom we have read. The other was the cure of Mrs. Acar who was cured of a tumor of the womb on July 30, 1933.

The other document of July 2, 1949 was a letter from the Bishop to the clergy of his diocese. The Bishop said: "We are able in all serenity and prudence to affirm that the Queen of Heaven appeared to the children of Beauraing during the winter of 1932-33 especially to show us in her maternal Heart the anxious appeal for prayer and the promise of her powerful mediation for the conversion of sinners."

Development of the Cult

The story of Beauraing spread rapidly throughout Belgium and then throughout other parts of northern Europe. Pilgrimages of penance are made twice a month. Other regular pilgrimages come from the Netherlands, France, and Germany. The total number of pilgrims each year is approximately 1,000,000.

Very slowly, the story of Beauraing is also becoming known throughout the rest

of the free world. Since 1950, the story has been told in numerous Catholic magazines and newspapers in the United States, Canada, India, and other places. The first official pilgrimage from the United States arrived at Beauraing in September, 1953.

An organization has been started to spread the Message of Our Lady of Beauraing in the United States: the Pro Maria Committee, Rev. Joseph Debergh, OMI, Director, 725 Merrimack St., Lowell, Massachusetts. The first public shrine to Our Lady of Beauraing in the U. S. was dedicated at Flint, Michigan, June 9, 1955.

* * *

What of the Five Children of Beauraing?

All five are married and are living quietly with their families. Some authorities believe that in the five "children" Our Lady wishes to give us models of family life and that she also wishes to emphasize the role of the lay people in carrying out her message.

Andree D. and Gilberte V. both live in Beauraing. One or both can be seen leading the Rosary every night at the shrine. Andree has three children. Gilberte has two. Gilberte's husband, a state policeman, was killed in an accident in April, 1953. He was a daily communicant.

Gilberte D. lives in Brussels. She has two children. Fernande V. lives in Namur and has five children.

Albert has two children. He lives in the Belgian Congo where he is helping to train native teachers.

All five have great devotion to the Blessed Mother, and they are bringing up their children to have devotion to her also. All five shun the limelight. They are not important, they say. They were merely the instruments through which Our Lady gave her message to the world.

Why did Our Lady appear at Beauraing?

The broad answer to that question is simple: She appeared at Beauraing for the same reason that she appeared at Lourdes, at Fatima, and many other places: *to save souls*. She wishes to help us save our souls, and she wishes to enlist our help in saving the souls of others.

Saints and mystics and theologians are agreed on this: the shortest, surest way to God is through Mary. That is because of the unique position she occupies as Mother of God, Mother of all mankind, Queen of Heaven, and Mediatrix of all Graces.

The important part that Mary plays in our salvation is not well enough understood. Many Catholics look upon devotion to Our Lady as something that has been added to Christian life. They look upon it as an accessory, a very helpful accessory to be sure, but one that we could, strictly speaking, do without.

The truth is that we depend upon Mary for our supernatural life just as a child depends on his earthly mother for his natural life. St. Louis Marie de Montfort says that "all the predestinate . . . are hidden in the womb of the most holy

Virgin, where they are guarded, nourished, and made to grow by that good Mother until she has brought them forth to glory after death."

At Beauraing Mary reminds us of her great power, of her great love for us, and of our dependence on her.

She wears a diadem, a symbol of her power. She shows her golden Heart, a symbol of her boundless mother-love.

She says: "I am the Immaculate Virgin . . . I am the Mother of God, the Queen of the Heavens. I will convert sinners."

What a tremendous meaning is packed into those few words.

And how important to our salvation!

Lourdes, Fatima and Beauraing.

They are connected like three links in a chain, or like three chapters in a book.

At each place Our Lady asked for a chapel. At Beauraing she specifically asked for pilgrimages. These shrines are visited by millions of pilgrims each year. The number of spiritual cures at the three shrines cannot be estimated. The amount of religious fervor that is generated cannot be computed in statistics. The shrines are having a profound effect upon Europe and upon the world.

Bishop Theas of Lourdes says that the apparitions at Lourdes and those at Beauraing should be studied together. He points out that purity was emphasized at Lourdes and that the Heart of Gold at Beauraing symbolizes love. "Purity and

love. That is what explains the Heart of the Blessed Virgin."

It is also true that the apparitions at Fatima and those at Beauraing should be studied together. The similarities between the two series of appearances are striking. In many ways, the Message of Beauraing is a repetition of the Message of Fatima. In other ways, the Message of Beauraing is an extension of the Message of Fatima.

What specific requests does Our Lady make at Beauraing?

They are the same requests she has made many times in the last century: 1) Prayer; 2) Sacrifice; 3) Devotion to her Immaculate Heart. Through these practices we can help to save our own souls, and we can help Mary save the souls of others.

PRAYER: At both Lourdes and Fatima Our Lady said "Pray for sinners." At Beauraing she said: "Pray . . . Pray a great deal . . . Pray always."

The Rosary is a powerful form of prayer and one that Our Lady loves. She emphasized this devotion at Lourdes by allowing the rosary to slip through her fingers while Bernadette said the prayers.

At Fatima she said: "Say the Rosary every day." When asked who she was, she said: "I am the Lady of the Rosary."

At Beauraing Our Lady did not mention the Rosary but she wore one, and she usually appeared while the children were saying the Rosary. It is evident that she wishes to stress the Rosary and that she wishes to encourage its recitation.

SACRIFICE: Under "sacrifice" are included penance and reparation. We make sacrifices in order to offer penance for our own sins and reparation for the sins of others. Our Lady has repeatedly asked for sacrifice, for penance, and for reparation.

During one of the apparitions at Lourdes, Bernadette turned toward the crowd and repeated Our Lady's request for "Penitence! Penitence!"

At Fatima Our Lady repeatedly asked for sacrifices.

The last words of Our Lady at Beauraing were: "Do you love my Son? Do you love me? Then sacrifice yourself for me."

DEVOTION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART: At Fatima Our Lady said: "God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart." She referred to her Immaculate Heart again and again. She asked that Russia be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart. She asked for the devotion of the Five First Saturdays in reparation to her Immaculate Heart. She said that some day her Immaculate Heart would triumph, that Russia would be converted and that a period of peace would be given to the world.

At Beauraing it seemed that Our Lady wished to remind the world once more of the importance of devotion to the Immaculate Heart. She did by showing her Immaculate Heart as a Heart of Gold.

The Feast of the Immaculate Heart, August 22, is the day of the biggest ceremonies at Beauraing.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Beauraing is Mary's promise: "*I will convert sinners.*"

She has mentioned sin in almost all her apparitions of the past century. At La Salette in 1846, she wept over the sins of the world and said she could no longer keep her Son from punishing the world. At Lourdes, she sometimes looked sad because of sin. At Fatima she said: "Many souls go to hell because they have no one to pray and make sacrifices for them." She also forecast dire calamities that would overtake the world if people did not reform.

At Beauraing Mary did not look sad, and she did not foretell calamities. At Beauraing she was the merciful Mother. She simply made the promise: "I will convert sinners." There were no conditions to this. (Although we know she will be able to convert more sinners if she has our prayers and sacrifices.)

"I will convert sinners."

In a world which seems crushed under the burden of its own sins what promise could be more consoling?

Our Lady of Beauraing, Pray for us!

PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF BEAURAING

Our Lady of Beauraing, Immaculate Virgin, ever victorious in all thy battles

for the kingdom of God, we beseech thee, convert sinners, as thou hast promised.

Exercise in their behalf the power of thy Immaculate Heart! Bring back to the love of God all souls who, deprived of sanctifying grace, stand in danger of eternal perdition.

O Heavenly Mother, cast thine eyes of mercy on thy poor children, and be our Help in all tribulations! Be thou the Health of the sick and Comforter of the afflicted.

Queen of Heaven, crowned with eternal glory, our love and our gratitude proclaim thee also Queen of our hearts and Sovereign of the world. We shall work for the extension of thy kingdom in ourselves, by sacrifice and imitation of thy virtues; and around us by frequent prayers and good works.

Mayest thou reign over the whole world and spread everywhere the kingdom of thy Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Father Hail Mary Glory be to the Father

*Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us
Our Lady of Beauraing, convert sinners
Queen of the Golden Heart, help the sick.*

MARIAN UNION OF BEAURAING

(Association of Prayers)

During Her many apparitions at Beauraing in 1932-33, the Blessed Virgin instantly invited us to prayer: "Pray, Pray very much, Pray Always."

To answer Her appeal, an Association of Prayers "Our Lady of Beauraing" was founded immediately. Following the recognition of the devotion, February 2, 1943, this Association redoubled in fervor and currently numbers thousands of adherents scattered throughout the world and united, through this Association, to the prayers which are said daily, and most particularly at night, at the foot of the Hawthorn.

OBLIGATIONS

The daily spiritual obligations of the Associates have been reduced to a minimum and consist of three degrees:

- a) *either* 3 Hail Marys, with the invocation: "Our Lady of Beauraing, convert sinners — You have promised us." (1st degree).
- b) *or* 1 decade of the Rosary, followed by the same invocation. (2nd degree).
- c) *or* the 3 Angelus, followed by the same invocation. (3rd degree).

All Associates are invited to sanctify the first Saturday of each month by assisting at Mass, receiving Holy Communion, and reciting the Rosary for the conversion of sinners.

The sick and invalids are encouraged to offer their daily sufferings for the extension of the reign of the Blessed Virgin in the world and for the conversion of sinners.

The habitual intentions of the Associates are the following:

- a) The conversion of sinners.
- b) All the intentions recommended at Beauraing.

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS:

1. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament celebrated at the Shrine the first Saturday of each month will be offered for the conversion of sinners and for the intentions of the promoters and Associates of the Marian Union.
2. Every day, the priests at Beauraing will have, at Mass, a special memento for the spiritual intentions of the Associates of the Marian Union.
3. The members may signify their particular intentions to the Pro Maria Committee of Lowell, Mass. The Committee in turn will recommend their intentions to the prayers of the pilgrims at the Shrine.
4. For the deceased: The Associates, of whose death the Committee is notified, will be recommended in a particular way at the Masses said at the Shrine, and will be recommended to the prayers of the readers of "La Voix de Beauraing," the official publication of the Shrine.

There are no dues for membership in this MARIAN UNION OF BEAURAING. For enrollment in this Association of Prayers, as well as for folder depicting Our Lady of Beauraing statues, medals, holy pictures, post cards, etc., please write to: Miss Doris M. Poisson, Secretary, PRO MARIA COMMITTEE, 22 Second Avenue, Lowell, Mass.

Rev. Joseph Debergh, OMI
Director, Pro Maria Committee
725 Merrimack Street
Lowell, Massachusetts

I

DECREE

Authorizing the Cult to Our Lady of Beauraing

By virtue of the decree of the Holy Office, dated December 7, 1942, granting Us power to express Our judgment freely on the case of Beauraing, in Our capacity of Ordinary thereof and of Our own authority;

By virtue of the notice of the diocesan Commission, which, following the first decree of the Holy Office, dated May 30th, 1942, has resumed investigation of the case;

Whereas no decisive objection was stated against the supernatural and divine character of what are designated as the apparitions of the Most Blessed Virgin to the children of Beauraing; but, on the contrary, the conjectures in favor of this supernatural and divine character seem very serious and the passing of the years has contributed only in making these conjectures more impressive;

Considering the current of sincere and deep devotion which has drawn the faithful toward Beauraing during the past ten years — and the numerous, often outstanding and even marvelous conversions, plus the many favors, both spiritual and otherwise, all linked to the event of Beauraing — the perfect orthodox character, simultaneously real, from a doctrinal point of view, and beneficial, of the Message of Beauraing;

Having prayed the Holy Ghost and entreated the Virgin of Mediation, full of grace, to assist Us;

We have decided and do decide as follows:

1. We allow the carrying on, in our diocese, of public devotions to Our Lady of Beauraing, that is, the intercession of Our Lady under that name, emphasizing the meaning of the emblems and words associated with the visions to the children of Beauraing and the organization of religious ceremonies near the hawthorn of the Apparitions.

It remains, however, forbidden to publish articles relating to the incident of Beauraing.

to propagate pictures, tableaux, statues, medals, etc. of Our Lady of Beauraing, without obtaining Our authorization.

2. Anxious to comply with the customary extreme cautiousness of the Church in such matters, We reserve Our definite judgment on the facts of Beauraing and on their character.
3. These decisions are valuable only regarding what we customarily call the apparitions to the children of Beauraing.

ANDRE-MARIE

Bishop of Namur

Given at Namur, February 19, 1943

II

DECREE

On the Subject of the Cures of Miss Van Laer and Mrs. Acar

Andre-Marie Charue, by the Grace of God and the Holy Apostolic See, Bishop of Namur

By virtue of the power conferred on Us by the decree of the Holy Office, on December 7, 1942, according to Us the faculty of bringing Our judgment to bear on the case of Beauraing, in Our capacity as Ordinary thereof and of Our own authority:

Having seen the reports of the canonical Commission appointed by Us for the study of the cures of Miss Van Laer of Turnhout (in religion, Sister Pudentia of the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Holy Family) and of Mrs. Acar, nee Marie-Madeleine Group, of St. Nicholas (Waes), in which are contained numerous testimonies judged worthy of belief, as well as some conclusions of medical experts having been able freely and separately to express their opinions about the nature of the said cures;

Having considered that these attestations where the value and the authority of the reasons are indisputable, prove, with the evidence, that Miss Van Laer and Mrs. Acar suffered from extremely grave diseases and that they had been cured instantly, perfectly and absolutely beyond curative power in

case at issue to account for these sudden unexpected changes;

Whereas it has therefore been demonstrated that these cures assume the nature of supernatural matters;

We acknowledge

1. That Miss Marie Van Laer who, for sixteen years, suffered from a serious disease, deemed incurable, of a tubercular nature, or more probably staphylococcic, in the region of the cervical vertebra and in the right leg, which had progressed to the final stage, has been immediately and absolutely cured on the twenty-fourth of June, 1933, on the day after a pilgrimage made to Beauraing for the purpose of obtaining a cure;

2. That Mrs. Acar-Group suffered from a myoma of the matrix, duly diagnosed by the attending physician, and found herself cured immediately and absolutely on July 30, 1933, on returning home from a pilgrimage made with the purpose of obtaining a cure.

Consequently, using Our power as Ordinary and taking into consideration the accounts and verdicts already sent Us by the diocesan Commission charged with canonical inquiry:

Having invoked the Holy Name of God;

We have judged and do judge, We have declared and do declare that the cures of Miss Van Laer and Mrs. Acar-Group are miraculous and that in view of circumstances in which they have taken place, they ought to be attributed to a special intervention of God through the intercession of Our Lady of Beauraing.

And let Our present judgment and Our declaration be made public for the honor of God, the glory of Our Lady, and the edification of the faithful.

Given at Namur, this second of July, 1949, on the Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady.

ANDRE-MARIE
Bishop of Namur
by the order of:
F. TOUSSAINT, Prosecretary

III

LETTER TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE

Reverend and Dear Confreres:

The publication of the decree which you have just read marks a decisive date in the history of the devotion to Our Lady of Beauraing.

As you know, when we officially permitted this devotion, our declaration enforced strict reservations: we deemed that the moment had not yet come for us to pronounce "upon the reality and the supernatural character of the facts." Since then, the reasons for hesitation have considerably decreased and we are able to say before God that the signs are not lacking to satisfy us personally of the foolish character of the prudent reserves made at the beginning. But we looked forward to the hour when we would be able to publish our final approval. That hour, we think, has come. The happy termination of the reports of the diocesan doctrinal Commission permits us to declare the miraculous nature of the two cures obtained through the intercession of Our Lady of Beauraing, occurring in the months which followed the events at Beauraing, among many other cases of spiritual and temporal favors, and at the height of a movement of Marian fervor which has subsisted to this day, these miraculous cures constitute the final element which wins our conviction of the supernatural character of the events.

We give thanks for it to God and to the Most Holy Virgin; **we are able in all serenity and prudence to affirm that the Queen of Heaven appeared to the children of Beauraing during the winter of 1932-1933, especially to show us in her maternal Heart the anxious appeal for prayer and the promise of her powerful mediation for the conversion of sinners.**

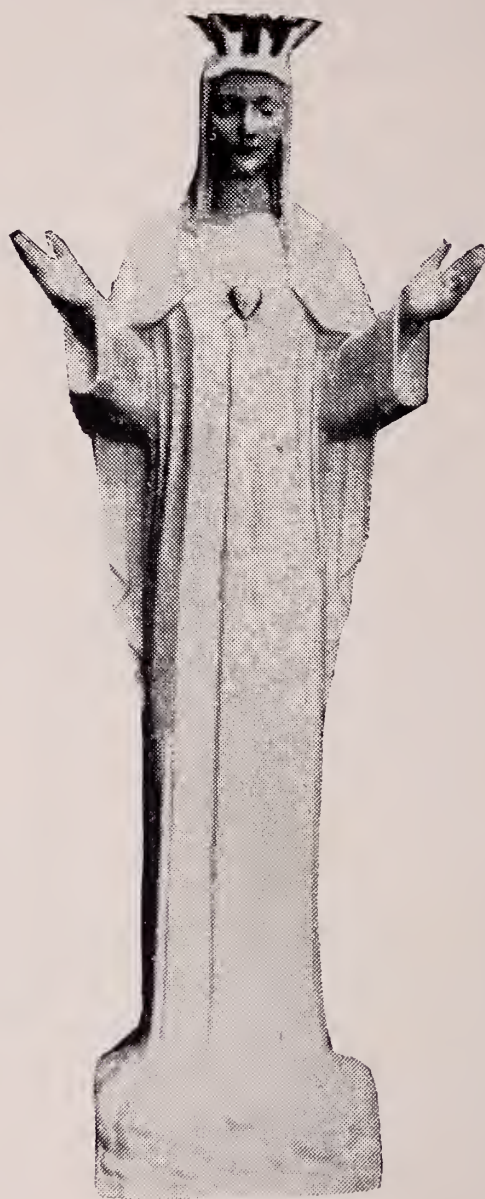
We, ourselves, marveling at the providential guidance which has led us after seven years to this final stage of the case, have signed this document with all the ardor of our heart and with the assurance that our entire diocese will join in our

thanksgiving. In the name of all our people we again tell Our Lady with a growing confidence: Among us you are Queen; we are yours.

Please believe, venerable and dear confreres, our sentiments of spiritual and affectionate devotion, in Our Savior and Our Lady.

Namur, July 2, 1949, on the Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady.

ANDRE-MARIE
Bishop of Namur



This is a reproduction of the official Beauraing statue. The cover picture is not Our Lady of Beauraing.

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